

For Insertion in the Congressional Record:

Statement of Congressman Edward J. Markey
Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of *Brown v. the Board of Education*
May 17, 2004

Making Brown a Reality

Fifty years ago today, in the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education*, Chief Justice Warren declared, unanimously, that “in the field of public education, the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. The Brown decision promised that every child, regardless of the color of his or her skin, would have unequivocal access to quality education and an equal opportunity to pursue his/her dreams. Since that moment, our society has evolved to the point where the idea of intentionally separating students on the basis of on the color of their skin in the United States of America is appalling. However, while we should certainly celebrate the demise of overt official racism, we must also critically examine where we are at this historical moment, recognize the many challenges ahead and reaffirm our commitment to making *Brown v. Board* a reality.

In Massachusetts we tend to think about segregation and racial disparity as a southern phenomenon, alien to our abolitionist New England roots. But a recent study released by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University found that the Metro-Boston area still remains a widely segregated society. In fact, 70% of white students attend suburban schools that are over 90% white, while more than 75% of black and Latino students attend schools in the inner city or in one of the urbanized satellite cities. The segregated schools of today are arguably no more equal than the segregated schools of the past. Students who attend high minority and high poverty schools are far less likely to graduate on time, be taught by a “highly qualified teacher” and apply to college, and are far more likely to drop out of school, score poorly on the SATs, and fail the MCAS.

I am proud of what has happened in my hometown, where Mayor Howard seized an opportunity to modernize the entire school system so that everybody in this diverse working-class community feels that people care about the education of Malden’s children, regardless of race or income. Unfortunately, this is the exception, not the rule. Efforts at the national level to support such initiatives have been very uneven. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act set lofty goals but is failing to provide the funding and the assistance needed to achieve those goals. President Bush’s budget for next year failed to provide \$9.4 billion of promised money to K-12 education, \$7.2 billion of which was intended to help schools educate our country’s most impoverished children. In order for our schools to make “adequate yearly progress,” the President needs to provide “adequate yearly funding.” Almost every day, I get calls from constituents, and communicate with teachers about the many problems with implementing standards without financial support.

Our work is clearly not done and there is too much at stake to leave the work unfinished. Education is not only a ladder of opportunity, but it is also an investment in our future. Our nation's security, economy, and place on the world stage depends on the success our educational system. Although children are only 24 percent of the population, they're 100 percent of our future and we cannot afford to provide any child with a substandard education.